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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000258

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FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: NEW PARLIAMENT SPEAKER AND DEPUTY SPEAKERS ALL
FROM RULING PARTY

Classified By: DCM Angie Bryan for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The Yemeni Parliament chose its new Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Speakers on February 11. The ruling party won all slots, despite the unpopularity of its nominated Speaker and the opposition's clever strategy to maximize its chances. End Summary.

The Winners:

12. (C) The Parliament elected on February 11 a new Speaker and three Deputy Speakers, all from the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party. The GPC-block pushed to victory former acting Speaker Yahya Ali al-Raie as Speaker and Mohammed Ali Salem al-Shadadi, Himyar al-Ahmar (son of the recently deceased Speaker of Parliament Abudullah al-Ahmar) and Akram Mohamed Atiyah as Deputy Speakers. Al-Raie was reportedly nominated at the direction of President Saleh and the Deputy Speaker candidates were chosen in a party meeting on February 10. Al-Raie was reported to have won 189 of the votes, while the opposition's candidate, Ali Ashal, won 69 votes.

The Also Rans:

13. (C) The opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) coalition block nominated on February 9 Islah MP Ali Ashal as their candidate for Speaker. On February 10, the JMP-block nominated only one candidate for the Deputy Speaker position: Zaid al-Shami. Despite the loss of their nominees, the JMP did not leave empty-handed. Mohamed al-Shadadi, although GPC, is a member of the reform-minded YemenPac (Yemeni Parliamentarians Against Corruption) and is well-liked among many opposition MPs.

GPC Used Clout to Push an Unpopular Candidate

14. (C) The GPC counted on its strong majority to carry its candidates to victory. (Note: The GPC has 229 out of 301 seats in Parliament, while the JMP has 58 seats and the independents 14 seats. End Note). Despite the win, however, not all GPC members were pleased with their choices. Al-Raie is not popular with many in the GPC Parliament block. GPC MP Nabil Basha told Polecon Chief on February 2 that the position of Speaker was "too big" for al-Raie. He also noted that, as Deputy Speaker, Al-Raie had, on more than one occasion, physically struck Parliamentarians. Al-Raie is even less liked outside of his party. Independent MP Sakhir al-Wajeih and Islah MP Abdul-Razzaq al-Hajiri told PolOffs on February 10 that al-Raie "has no respect for the constitution, the Parliament, or MPs." Al-Wajeih reported that al-Raie once attempted to physically fight him during a

Parliamentary session after al-Wajeeh received applause during a debate. Al-Raie is generally described as a bully and is known to be "the President's man," according to SaadEddine Talib, former MP and current member of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption (SNACC).

Opposition Strategy

15. (C) Anticipating that the GPC's majority would allow it to place its candidates in the presidium, the JMP hatched a "spoiler strategy" for these elections. Ashal, the JMP candidate for Speaker, told PolEcon Chief on February 10 that he did not expect to gain the votes required to win the position, but, instead, hoped to gain sufficient support to prevent al-Raie from taking the Speaker's chair on the first vote. (Note: While a simple majority of the parliamentarians present is sufficient to win the Speakership, if a candidate does not gain a simple majority of the entire membership his election must be confirmed by a second vote. End Note.) Ashal felt that forcing a second vote would send a clear message that al-Raie was not a consensus choice of the membership.

16. (C) Similarly, the decision to nominate only one Deputy Speaker candidate was also a strategic step. According to Counselor to the Presidium Salem Ahmed Bintaleb, while nominating only one candidate made it impossible for the coalition to take more than one of the three Deputy Speaker positions, it forestalled any splitting of the opposition JMP vote. (Note: The Presidium is a term used to denote the Speaker of Parliament and the three Deputy Speakers. End Note). Further, by leaving only one alternative to the GPC slate of Deputy Speaker candidates, the JMP hoped to take

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maximum advantage of the "protest vote" among GPC members to the strong-arm tactics used by that party's leadership, particularly in imposing al-Raie as the candidate for Speaker.

Comment

17. (C) With a large majority and the backing of President Saleh, it was expected that al-Raie would take the Speakership. The JMP, however, crafted a very intelligent strategy to make the best of a bad situation. This election has shown that despite discontent within the party, GPC members will continue to be loyal when it counts the most. End Comment.
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